

Appendix 1 – Extracts from the National Planning Policy Framework

1.1 The Foreword to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that In order to fulfil its purpose of helping achieve sustainable development, planning must not simply be about scrutiny. Planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives. And that:-

“This should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them. Dismantling the unaccountable regional apparatus and introducing neighbourhood planning addresses this.

In part, people have been put off from getting involved because planning policy itself has become so elaborate and forbidding – the preserve of specialists, rather than people in communities.

This National Planning Policy Framework changes that. By replacing over a thousand pages of national policy with around fifty, written simply and clearly, we are allowing people and communities back into planning.”

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government’s requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

2.3 Central to the guidance is that development should be sustainable. It sets out three dimensions to sustainable development as follows:-

“● an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

● a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

● an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”

2.4 It also states that plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

2.5 Paragraph 79 states that The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

2.6 It sets out the purposes of the Green Belt as follows:-

“Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”

2.7 Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.

2.8 As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

2.9 Paragraph 88 says that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

2.10 Chapter 10 (paragraph 100) of the National Planning Policy Framework puts flood prevention at the core of all planning decision making.

2.11 Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Local Plans should be supported by Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources, taking account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management bodies, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards. Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, taking account of the impacts of climate change, by:

- applying the Sequential Test;
- if necessary, applying the Exception Test;
- safeguarding land from development that is required for current and future flood management;
- using opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and
- impacts of flooding; and
- where climate change is expected to increase flood risk so that some existing development may not be sustainable in the long-term, seeking opportunities to facilitate the relocation of development, including housing, to more sustainable locations.

2.12 With regard to plan-making the NPPF says that:-

“Local Plans must be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. To this end, they should be consistent with the principles and policies set out in this Framework, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.”

2.13 In doing so it says that:-

“Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made.”

2.14 The NPPF explains that a Local Plan will be examined by an independent inspector whose role is to assess whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is sound. A local planning authority should submit a plan for examination which it considers is “sound” – namely that it is:

“● Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;

● Justified – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;

● Effective – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and

● Consistent with national policy – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.”